

70

DOCI-194-74

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

20 August 1974  
OCI 1314/74

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Will Moscow "Test the Mettle" of the New US Administration?

We do not expect the Soviet Union to take provocative action deliberately designed to test the mettle of the new administration. The Soviet leadership will want to develop a feel for how the President responds to conflicts not directly involving the US and the USSR, and for the kind of personal relationship he wishes to establish with General Secretary Brezhnev. If there is a Soviet "test" of the President, it is likely to be of his willingness to work with the USSR on important problems, and of his political muscle in getting Congress and his administration to support detente-related policies--for instance, a new SALT offer. The following factors, we believe, will be controlling in Moscow:

- The national policy goals that set the USSR on the detente path are no less important now than they were a week ago, or at any time over the past few years. To move in such a way as to set back detente severely would impair the ability of the Soviets to cope with the Chinese, to gain access to Western capital and technology, and to manage local crises that carry the risk of super-power involvement.
- The Soviets are aware that President Ford has relatively less experience in international affairs than his predecessor and will be devoting considerable attention to domestic matters, but his retention of former President

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

Classified by <u>005827</u>
Exempt from general declassification schedule of E. O. 11652, exemption category:
5B (1), (2) (3) or (4) (circle one or more)
Automatically declassified on
DATE IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE
(unless impossible, insert date or event)

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

Nixon's principal advisers and his stand on foreign policy issues both before and after taking office can leave Moscow in little doubt that he would react strongly to a provocative act.

- The Soviets must assume that a new President, unburdened by Watergate, enjoying a better relationship with Congress, and having more support from the public, would be better able to galvanize the nation to deal firmly with a provocation.
- The Soviets probably judge that President Ford's stronger position means that if they cultivate rather than challenge him, they have a better chance to gain practical benefit from detente, for instance by passage of most-favored-nation legislation.

This is not to say the Soviets will grant the new administration a honeymoon. They will continue to pursue their own interests where they believe this can be done at acceptable cost or risk in terms of their relationship with the US. In the short run, they may be somewhat more cautious than in the recent past, if only because they will be concerned that acts which might in other times have passed with a protest will draw a stronger reaction from a new President.

Their caution, however, will certainly diminish over the next few weeks and months. In the process, Moscow's pursuit of its interests in various parts of the world and its association with less than fully controlled allies and clients will resurface old problems and probably lead to some new ones.

#### Middle East

Already Soviet officials have sought to stir up Arab fears that the presidential change will slow or disrupt the improvement of US-Arab relations that has marked the post-October war period. The Soviets can be expected to play up

-2-

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

any hesitation on the part of the President to carry through on commitments made during former president Nixon's visit to the Middle East or any sign that US interest in a just peace in the area has slackened. Sadat, already under fire from some of the more radical Arab states because he has taken the lead in moving toward a rapprochement with the US, will probably be the principal Soviet target. The Soviets may also intensify their pressure for a resumption of the Geneva conference and at the same time, play upon Arab nervousness about an Israeli attack.

#### Cyprus

The Soviets have been hard-pressed to find a policy that would allow them to benefit from the fighting. Moscow has been unable to influence events directly. Essentially it has had to stand by as the situation has moved farther away from its preferred outcome--an independent, non-aligned Cyprus with all foreign forces withdrawn. Over the longer term, Soviet prospects may be somewhat brighter. The changed Greek political situation and the strains in the NATO alliance may offer some opportunities for more active Soviet involvement in Greece, but Moscow will move cautiously so as not to alienate Turkey. There may also be some mileage for Moscow in identifying with the distress of the non-aligned countries over the ouster of Makarios and in blaming NATO for events on Cyprus. The Soviets had, prior to President Ford's inauguration suggested the possibility of US-Soviet cooperation to settle the Cyprus conflict, and they may return to this as the dust settles.

#### Eastern Europe

Soviet efforts to pursue detente while maintaining discipline among its allies has been a continuing problem, and there is no reason to expect that Moscow's tactics to achieve both will be affected by the change in US administrations. Soviet relations with Romania may be an exception. Ceausescu found it useful to stress the personal relationship he had with former President Nixon. Until Ceausescu can establish a similar relationship with President Ford, the Soviets might step up their efforts to nibble away at Romanian independence. A significant deterioration in the Greek-Turkish situation

-3-

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

which would enable Moscow to rationalize a military buildup in Bulgaria could be used to put pressure on Romania, but whether the Soviets choose to do this would be little influenced by the change in US administrations.

### Berlin

The significant feature of the mini-access crisis that resulted from Bonn's establishment of the Federal Environmental Office in East Berlin is the care Moscow took to keep the issue within bounds even as political problems in the US worsened. Berlin's geography and the ambiguity of the international agreements defining its political status make it a Soviet hostage, but Moscow must consider its actions there in light of its broader interests in Western Europe. Protests about what it considers violations of the Quadripartite Agreement or even a resumption of the harassment we saw last month are probable, but a major move is most unlikely.

### The Indian Ocean and South Asia

Soviet activities in this area have essentially been responses to targets of opportunity. There is no reason to think Moscow will not be alert to such openings in the future, but it is not likely to become more directly involved in regional disputes, such as those between Afghanistan and Pakistan and between Iran and Iraq, because of a change in the administration.

### China

The Soviets had identified former President Nixon with the US-Chinese rapprochement, and they may hope that the US now will not move as rapidly in this direction. Conceivably, they could believe that the former President's resignation will add to political contention in China, but it is very doubtful that they anticipate gaining more than marginal advantage. The Soviets will not conclude that the US-Chinese relationship has been sufficiently affected by the change in administrations to call for a fundamental alteration in their own policy toward China.

### Multilateral Negotiations

Especially in SALT and MBFR, we expect the Soviets to sit back for a time and see if the new US administration has

-4-

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

revised offers to make. In CSCE, where the Soviets are more anxious to see progress, they may make some minor modifications in their position--as they probably had already planned to do this fall.

-5-

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

SENDER WILL CHECK CLASSIFICATION TOP AND BOTTOM			
UNCLASSIFIED	CONFIDENTIAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SECRET
<b>OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP</b>			
TO	N	INITIALS	
1	D/OCI		
2			
3			
4	<i>clps</i>		
5	<i>2</i> [redacted] <i>- for file</i>		
6			
ACTION		DIRECT REPLY	PREPARE REPLY
APPROVAL		DISPATCH	RECOMMENDATION
COMMENT		FILE	RETURN
CONCURRENCE		INFORMATION	SIGNATURE
<b>Remarks:</b> Distribution: Orig & 2 - D/OCI 1 - NIO attn: [redacted] 1 - [redacted] 2 - USSR-EE files 1 - Soviet Foreign Policy Branch  <i>also DCI</i> <i>DDCI</i> <i>DDI</i>			
FOLD HERE TO RETURN TO SENDER			
[redacted]			DATE
UNCLASSIFIED			CONFIDENTIAL
UNCLASSIFIED			CONFIDENTIAL

FORM NO. 1-67 237 Use previous editions

(40)